1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31



The painted designs vary among different individuals, but are fairly persistent for each. The prevailing design at Costa Rica in 1893 was that of the aged matron known as Juana Maria (plate XVIII), with variations in detail such as that exhibited by her unmarried daughter Candelaria (the Seri belle shown in plate XXIV); next in frequency were the designs, in white and red, exhibited by the matrons portrayed in plates XX and XXII. Other designs observed are indicated in plate XXVI. The variations in individual designs are apparently due either to varying care in the application of the paint or to the degree of obliteration by wear—e. g., the withered Juana Maria sometimes put on her design askew and was negligent of details, while the blooming Candelaria greatly elaborated the details of the pattern and carefully perfected the symmetry of the whole when preparing for her full-dress sitting before the camera (plate XXIV), so that her design was then gorgeous by contrast with the nearly obliterated blur of a half-hour before. The designs are renewed every few days, especially for ceremonious occasions, and hence are practically permanent.

When grouped in relation to their wearers, the designs are found to exhibit family connection. Thus, Juana Maria's design is repeated, with greater elaboration of detail and with a pair of supplementary marks, in that of her daughter Candelaria; the winged symbol of the Seri matron portrayed in plate XX is repeated with minor variations in that of her daughter, the Seri maiden pictured in plate XXV; while the symbols of the mother and infant daughter depicted in plate XV are essentially alike. It is noticeable, too, that in the nearly spontaneous arrangement of individuals in the group shown in plate XIII there is a tendency toward subgrouping by symbols; and it was constantly observed that the family groups gathered about particular jacales (such as that shown in plate XIV) displayed corresponding designs, though there were frequent visitors from neighboring jacales bearing other designs. Briefly, all the observed facts, as well as the supplementary information gained by inquiry, indicate that the designs are hereditary in the female line, but are susceptible of slight modification both in elaborateness of detail and in the addition of minor supplementary features.

The principal apparatus and materials used in the face-painting are illustrated in plate XXVII. The chief pigments are ocher, gypsum, and the rare mineral dumortierite; the ocher yields various shades of red, ranging from pink to brown; the gypsum affords the white used in most of the designs; while the dumortierite is the source of the slightly varying tints of blue. So far as was observed, the pigments are not blended by mixing, though there is some blending due to overlapping in application. The ocher is commonly extracted and transported as lumps of ocherous clay or ocherous gypsum (plate XXVII, figures 1 and 5), though it is sometimes reduced to powder and transported in bits of skin or rag, or in cylinders of cane (plate XXVII, figures 3 and 4); and it is

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31



386 prepared by trituration with a pebble or rubbing with the fingers, usually in a shell cup. Sometimes the shell used for the purpose is the [412] valve of a *Cardium*, which serves indiscriminately as cup, spoon, skin-scraper, etc; but preference is apparently given to thick and strong shells, such as the wave-worn valve of *Chama* (?), shown in plate XXVII, figure 7, which are consecrated to the use and eventually buried [764] with the user, together with a supply of the paint (like that illustrated in the cane cylinder—figure 4—which was a mortuary sacrifice). The gypsum is usually carried in natural slabs or other fragments, perhaps rounded by wear (plate XXVII, figures 6 and 8); it is prepared by wetting and rubbing two pieces together, the larger being reduced to metate shape by the operation. The dumortierite was observed only in the form of a pencil made by pulverizing the substance and mixing with sufficient clay to give consistency. The several pigments are 302 applied wet by means of human-hair brushes kept for the purpose, the process occupying from half an hour to three or four hours for the more elaborate designs. So far as observed at Costa Rica in 1894, the paints were mixed in water only; but since painting outfits found on [386] Tiburon island in 1895 were smeared with grease, it is probable that either water or fats may serve for menstrua, at the convenience of the artists. Commonly the process of painting is measurably cooperative. The matron usually depicts her device on the faces of her daughters [593] up to the age of 12 or 15 years, when they learn to make the applications themselves; and frequently two or more women (usually those [47] with similar devices) work together in preparing and applying the pigments, each laying the paint on her own face and apparently guiding her hand partly by the sense of feeling and partly by suggestions from her coworkers; but Candelaria and some other of the younger women at Costa Rica frequently worked alone, aided by a mirror in the form of a shallow bowl of water set in the shadow while the brilliant desert glare fell full on the face.

317 The mines yielding the pigments were not located. The geologic conditions are such that the ochers are undoubtedly abundant; but it is probable that the gypsum is uncommon and confined to a remote locality or two, and that the dumortierite is rare and scanty here as elsewhere. The care with which the paints are preserved, prepared, and 386 applied, the fact that they are indispensable feminine appurtenances 435 even on the longest journeys, and their sacred rôle in the mortuary customs, all combine to indicate that they are among the most highly prized possessions of the people and by far the most precious of their minerals.

The sematic functions of the designs are esoteric, yet an inkling of 302 their meaning was obtained through Mashém, the interpreter at Costa 614 Rica in 1894; from his expressions it appears that the designs are sacred insignia of totemic character, serving to denote the clans of which the tribe is composed. But three clans were identified, and

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31



614 earlier paragraphs (pp. 164–169); these symbols evidently represent an
[302] exclusively maternal organization into clans consecrated to zoic tutelaries. The tutelaries, or totems, together with the clan names and all personal designations connected with the totems, are highly esoteric, and were not ascertained save in the few cases mentioned above.[1]

It should be observed that the identification of kindred by the alien
● 593 observer is difficult and somewhat uncertain, since the relationships recognized in Seri sociality are not equivalent to those customary among Caucasians. It was found especially difficult to identify the husband
[582] of the jacal, partly because he is commonly incongruously younger (and hence relatively smaller) than the mistress, and partly because of the undignified position of outer guard into which he is forced by the tribal etiquette. Moreover, his connection with the house is veiled by the absence of authority over both children and domestic affairs, though he exercises such authority freely (within the customary limits) in the
[842] jacales of his female relatives. There is, indeed, some question as to the clear recognition of paternity; certainly the females have no term
601 for "my father", i. e., the term is the same as that for "my mother", *em*, though the males distinguish the maternal ancestor by a suffixed syllable (*e*="my father"; *e-ta* or *i-tah*="my mother"), which seems to be a magnificative or an intensificative element. It is noteworthy that the kinship terminology is strikingly meager; also that while the records suggest various significant points, the material is hardly rich enough to warrant complete synthesis of the consanguineal system.

While the burden of the more permanent property pertains to the
421 women, there is a decided differentiation of labor with a concomitant vesting of certain property in the warriors—the distinctively masculine chattels comprising arrows, quivers, bows, turtle-harpoons, etc. There are indications that the balsas, too, are regarded as masculine property. The impermanent possessions—water, food, etc—seem to be the common property of men, women, and children, except in so far as the
[264] right is regulated by regimentation; for the privileges of eating and drinking are enjoyed in the order of seniority. In the reckoning of
554 seniority, the chief (who is comonly such in virtue of his position as
602 nominal elder brother of a prolific dame) ranks first, and is followed by other warriors in an order affected in an undetermined way by conjugal relations as well as by their prowess or sagacity (the equivalents of age in primitive philosophy) down to an undetermined point—apparently fixed by puberty; then comes the clanmother, followed by her daughters in the order of nominal age, which is affected by the status of spouses and the number of living offspring; finally come the children, practically in the order of their strength (which also is deemed an equivalent of age), though the girls—especially those

[121] [1] The chief object of the 1895 expedition was to pursue the inquiries concerning social organization, totems, etc; but, as mentioned elsewhere, this object was defeated by the troublous history of the tribe during the earlier part of 1895, and the consequent revival and intensification of their animosity toward aliens.

2: Kroeber E-5 (1930) 1931 NU31 Seri NU31



in endearment when drunk. This may apply also to other siblings-in-law.

Younger siblings (? and other relatives) may say nothing obscene before the older, out of respect for them; but the older talk freely before the younger. This applies to both men and women. Otherwise there seems to be little prudery; the informant recited the names of the private parts before his wife and children, and she indifferently repeated them after him in confirmation.

There is no teknonymy.

The dead are buried. Cremation of the body seemed unknown to the informant. All property of the dead person is burned or destroyed. His balsa was burned; modern boats are not, because they "belong to the government," which furnishes the lumber. The house is abandoned and a new one built a short distance away. The name of the dead is not spoken.

## *Kinship*

The Seri kinship system is distinguished by three general features: the large number of terms; the strong tendency to terms reciprocal in meaning; and the distinction made between older and younger siblings of nearer relatives if they are of the same sex. All of these are characteristic Yuman traits.

The number of terms obtained is 50; which number might have been increased if step-relatives, great-grandparents, great-uncle-aunts, siblings of siblings-in-law, spouses of uncles-aunts, and spouses had been inquired for. However, the informant seemed to feel that the list was exhausted with the set obtained; before that, he pursued the subject of his own accord. Fifty is an unusually large number of kinship names in any language; the more so, since there are no cousin terms. The 12 siblings-in-law terms—a quite extraordinary number—swell the total.

Conceptually reciprocal terms dominate the system except in the sibling class. The informant soon realized this principle. Some of the reciprocals are derivatives; others are not; self-reciprocals are lacking. This last fact helps increase the size of the system.

The distinction between older and younger siblings of the same (but not of the opposite) sex as nearer relatives is consistently carried out for uncles-aunts and spouses' siblings (or siblings' spouses).

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| ẽl | father | reciprocals | iẽ'k (man's son), ẽq man's daughter) |
| e't·e | mother | rec. iq'ẽt | (woman's child) |
| e'p·ẽe | father's father | rec. ik-e'pẽe | (man's son's child) |
| emẽe | father's mother | rec. eka'ẽak | (woman's son's chd.) |
| ẽ'ẽe | mother's father | rec. iqẽeí | (man's dtr.'s child) |
| ẽkt | mother's mother | rec. iqaq | (woman's dtr.'s chd.) |

535 semi-darkness.
123 Soon two little boys joined the dance, stepping up and down in the sand. Lighted only by the flickering flames of the driftwood fires on the shores of this mysterious and dreaded isle, the soft murmur of the sea as a refrain to the wild chanting, the weird circling of glittering eyes, and wild dark faces, presented a scene of uncanny and savage fascination witnessed by white men probably for the first time.

[533] After each stanza there was a short rest. The singing was similar to most other tribal chanting.

582 836 622 Bob made the remark that the girl was old enough to be broken in by the old Chief. I said, "How?"

583 [839] He said, when a girl thirteen or fourteen has her menses, the Chief takes her and goes through the family act. This is called 'breaking her in'. She is then eligible for marriage. A young man desiring marriage has to purchase the girl by giving the father a boat or rifle, both being necessary to the Seri's existence and pro-
585 tection. At the wedding they have sort of a fiesta and much mescal is drunk, which properly solemnizes a wedding.

844 845 When a girl has a baby it usually comes very naturally and easily, but I remember one girl's first baby was three days in coming, and she suffered a great deal. This was on a subsequent trip. She was staying with many of her people on the mainland and someone asked them if they didn't want a doctor or other help. They said: No, they had one. It was a Medicine Man who chanted over the girl and dug hollows in the sand to fit her heels into. He said that the legs had to be kept apart. This was all he did. But ordinarily there is no trouble, and if a baby is born at noon the mother is up and doing, and cooks supper
• [543] for her lord and master. The men treat their wives with kindness and each shares with the other any delicacy.

462 [303] [482] In Seriland domestic duties are reversed from the usual Indian methods. The men get the water and the women get the wood. This consists mostly of driftwood gathered along the shore, and it is a picturesque sight to see a string of women and girls bringing in loads of wood in baskets on their heads at sunset.

622 595 There are no plural marriages, but sometimes when a Chief is old, or rather when his wife is old and can have no more babies, he can take a younger woman as his wife. The present Chief is getting old now, almost too old to break in the girls, so they may get a younger man. This might be called the perquisites of office. He takes the cream.

832 825 They hunt lice in the head and eat them. This is said to increase the amorous desires. The penis of the male turtle is cut out and dried. This is pounded and pulverized and placed in the food of the women. This is said to create a desire for a man and the family act.

000 search out an old fish head or Pelican bone. Discouraged, never!

123 223 We had intended going to Alcatraz *(Pelican Island)* and have the Indians secure more skins for us at night, but the wind was strong and not favorable, so the trip was put off. The Indians hold up torches of dry *pitahalla*, while another Indian knocks the Pelicans over the head.

123 224 Stan and three Indians started out for the *picachos* with rifles in a hunt for mountain lions and a *tigre* our Indian said he saw. They returned in the afternoon tired and hungry and carrying no game. Stan had mounted the highest peak, an almost perpendicular one, and dangerous climb.

123 593 One member of the hunting party, Santo Blanco *(Holy White)* which belies his name---as he is neither white nor holy---evidently didn't find his dinner waiting for him, and proceeded to beat up his poor wife. Perhaps she didn't expect him so soon or perhaps the larder was empty. At any rate, another woman, Luis Torres' wife, flew to her assistance and grabbed the rifle or stick and he cut her hand cruelly with his knife. She was brought whimpering to our camp, her poor thin hand dripping blood. One or two sympathizing women, crying softly, followed her.

I immediately put some flour over the cut and tore up strips of cotton goods and wrapped them round and round her hand, then pressed the veins to check the hemorrhage, and held her hand up. After fifteen or twenty minutes it ceased to drip, and an Indian brought me some mentholatum from my grip. I bathed her hand in salt water while she whimpered softly, put on the salve and re-wrapped her hand in clean goods and she returned to her camp. Her child picked up the discarded bloody clothes and took them to her.

123 Roberto had gone back for the things he had left, and at noon had returned with the car to Santa Cruz, intending to return by mule in the evening. He returned long after dark after five hours in the saddle. He had been bucked off once and lost in a jungle of timber, both down and standing for two hours. He was fenced inside this tangle, he said, finding it almost impossible to escape.

The mule was later to be tied up, rolled into the boat and taken to the Island for my use, so I would not get worn out walking and carrying food and water.

Again, we were lulled to sleep by the murmur of the sea.

On account of unfavorable conditions, we did not start in the boat the next morning, but fully expected to start the following morning. After breakfast we decided to give the Indians a feast. One Seri secured a five-gallon can three-quarters filled with water, and one by one I poured four cups of flour in it. I hesitated a moment and the Indian said "too much water," and all the crowd waited with bated breath. When I poured in an extra cup-full a great sigh of

[text continues on p. 200]